

# **USACE Regional Field Historical Program**

## ***A New Approach***

### **I. Existing Field Historical Program.**

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The USACE field historical program is governed by ER 870B1B1, *Field Operating Activities Historical Programs*, dated 30 April 1990. The Office of History, HQUSACE, is the proponent of this regulation. It incorporates the requirements of AR 870B5, *Military History: Responsibilities, Policies, and Procedures* and AR 870B20, *Historical Activities: Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Army Art*. The U.S. Army Center of Military History is the proponent of both Army regulations.

The field historical program outlined in ER 870B1B1 is a carefully coordinated program in which all requirements are interrelated and contribute to two basic goals: preserving and interpreting the history of the Corps of Engineers and making that history available to a wide audience. The most important audience is the leadership and staff of USACE but other audiences, such as the general public and the professional historical community, are also important.

The requirements of the existing field historical program are as follows:

1. Designating a historical program manager and a historical advisory committee.
2. Maintaining an installation historical file.
3. Producing an annual historical report.
4. Producing a basic organization history and five-year updates.
5. Conducting oral history interviews.
6. Maintaining a list of historical artifacts relating to the Corps of Engineers.

#### ***1. Historical Program Manager.***

AR 870B5 requires major Army commands (MACOM) commanders to establish a history office in each of their major subordinate commands (MSCs) and to staff each office with at least one professional historian. Although professional historians have served on the staffs of some USACE field organizations for almost two decades, there have never been more than a handful of these historians.

- At its peak the number of field historians reached seven, but none of these historians was able to devote full time to the historical program. The historians were generally located in public affairs or planning offices and devoted a substantial portion of their time to the duties of these offices, including cultural resources management activities.
- In the last few years, the number of field historians has declined to three due to retirements, reassignments, and resignations (none have been RIFed).

At present there are GSB0170 series historians in St. Paul District, Louisville District, and Los Angeles District (part-time). The St. Paul District historian is located in the engineering and planning division and devotes most of his time to cultural resources management activities. Located in Public Affairs offices, the Louisville District and Los Angeles District historians are located in public affairs offices and participate heavily in the activities of these offices.

In the vast majority of USACE field offices, historical program management responsibility is assigned as an additional duty. ER 10B1B2, *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Divisions and District Offices: Organization and Functions*, allows the commander to assign this duty at his or her discretion. Most commanders assign the duty to public affairs or information management (records managers or librarians). Some of the historical program managers have had this duty for several years and have excellent historical programs, but they always direct the historical program as an addition to the normal responsibilities of their position.

The historical committee advises and assists the historical program manager in carrying out the historical program. The committee is composed of senior staff in the organization and is chaired by the deputy commander. In some organizations the committee plays an active role; in others it rarely meets.

## ***2. Installation Historical File.***

Each organization is required to maintain an installation historical file, designated File Number 870B5b under AR 25B400B2, *The Modern Army Recordkeeping System (MARKS)*. The purpose of the installation historical file is to preserve and make readily accessible copies of the most important documents relating to the organization's history. The secondary purpose of the file is to provide a location for important historical materials that do not readily fit into other MARKS categories, such as oral history interview transcripts, organization newspapers, donated materials from retirees, or materials that should be readily available as reference materials, such as organizational charts or important memoranda.

Most documents should be retired to federal records centers according to MARKS, but many organizations are not doing as good a job of retiring records as they did in the past. In addition, new modes of communication, such as the telephone and the computer, are making it more difficult to preserve a comprehensive and meaningful record of an organization's past. The installation historical file will not solve this problem, which is both pervasive and corrosive, but it is a convenient, official method for preserving historically important materials and making them readily available to the organization's leaders and

staff and to historians. The file should be an important source of information for the preparation of the annual historical report and the published histories and updates.

### ***3. Annual Historical Report.***

Most Army organizations at the division and nondivisional brigade level are required to produce a compilation of the most important events in the organization's history during the preceding year. AR 870B5 specifies that MACOMs and their next subordinate commands produce annual historical reports. The MACOM reviews the major subordinate commands' annual historical reports, and the Center of Military History reviews the MACOM's annual historical reports. ER 870B1B1 requires all USACE organizations to prepare an annual historical report.

The historical reports should be based on material preserved in the installation historical file, and material collected to prepare the annual report should be filed in the installation historical file. This background material and the annual report then become an important source of information for the preparation of the historical updates.

### ***4. Organization History and Updates.***

Each USACE organization is required to have a basic history covering the period from the first Corps of Engineers activity in the area to the present. After the publication of the basic history, historical updates are required at five-year intervals. Organizations have the option of publishing a project history or a history of some other important aspect of the organization's activities and then publishing a ten-year update, instead of a five-year one. Most of the basic histories and updates have been written under contract.

### ***5. Oral History Interviews.***

Oral history interviews capture the unique experiences and perspectives of individual civilian and military members of USACE and preserve those recollections for the future. Interviews are a valuable supplement to official documentary and electronic sources, providing information and context that is often absent from the official record.

All USACE organizations are required by ER 870B1B1 to have an oral history program, which interviews long-service civilians (usually when they retire) and departing commanders. These interviews are recorded on audio or video cassettes and transcribed. Oral history interviews provide valuable source material for the preparation of basic histories and updates.

## ***6. List of Historical Artifacts.***

ER 870B1B1 requires each organization to maintain a list of artifacts and objects relating to the history of the Corps and the history of the Corps' role in the development of engineering technology. These artifacts are historical properties governed by AR 870B5 and AR 870B20 and may support the USACE museum program. Although the artifacts remain in the care of the organization, they are accountable property and should be protected from inappropriate disposal, theft, and physical deterioration.

## **II. Existing Program.**

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Except for the three districts that have historians, the responsibility for managing the historical program is assigned as an additional duty to an existing office. Historical program managers must request funding each year for activities recommended by the history committee.

A number of historical program managers request assistance from the Office of History because they do not have experience in contracting for historical services. ER 870B1B1 offers assistance from the Office of History, including the possibility of sending a historian to serve on the technical evaluation committee, but many organizations do not take advantage of these services. As a result some of the contractors are marginally qualified and do not produce products that satisfy the organization nor the Office of History. Experience with unsuccessful contracts has led the Office of History to encourage organizations to use its services early in the contracting process; but in spite of these efforts, the Office of History is still involved in a number of efforts to salvage acceptable products from problem contracts. The lack of experience in historical contracting and past problems make historical program managers reluctant to undertake the contracting process, and the press of their normal duties makes it difficult for them to find the time to work with an often unfamiliar program.

Problems with funding and contracting have made it difficult for historical program managers to fulfill the requirement to produce published histories. In the 1970s, however, the Corps did produce an impressive array of basic organizational histories under contract.

- Only three districts do not have published basic histories; one of those districts has an approved history that has not been printed.
- At the division level, the record is less impressive. Of fourteen current or former divisions, half have published basic histories; three have approved drafts that have not been printed.
- Three of four laboratories have basic histories, but only one field operating activity (FOA) has such a history.

Although most districts and divisions have basic histories, few of them have updated those histories.

- Of the districts that need updates or project histories, only nine have published them; ten more have updates or project histories in process or have approved drafts that have not been printed.
- At the division level, only three have updated their histories.

Thus while USACE has a solid, but incomplete foundation of basic histories, it has not kept those histories current.

Compliance with the other requirements of the historical program is spotty. Less than half of the organizations produce annual historical reports or have provided evidence that they have oral history interview programs. Most do not appear to maintain an installation historical file. As a result many historical contractors working on updates find it difficult to obtain information and rely, often too heavily, on oral history interviews conducted years after the events the historians are attempting to chronicle. If adherence to records management standards does not improve, USACE will find it increasingly difficult in the future to document and learn from its history.

### **III. Proposed New Regional Field Historical Program.**

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The proposed program has two components:

1. It establishes positions for five regional historians who will work with field organizations to implement the new historical program requirements.
2. It reduces and consolidates the requirements of the field historical program.

#### ***1. Regional Historians.***

The proposed program establishes five new positions for GSB0170 series historians. The new positions, funded by HQUSACE, will be organizationally located in the Office of History, HQUSACE, and the historians will report to the Chief, Office of History. The five historians will be physically located in five field organizations. In addition to the five regional historians, one historian in the Office of History will be responsible for liaison with the regional historians.

The regional historians will serve as proponents of the USACE field historical program and work with the district, division, laboratory, and FOA historical program managers to execute the new requirements of the field historical program. The regional historians will rely heavily on the support of historical contractors to fulfill program requirements. With the assistance of the Office of History, the regional historians will draw up scopes of work for historical activities, serve on technical evaluation committees, and act as contracting

officers' representatives (CORs) for the required historical services contracts. The regional historians will review contractor products to insure adherence to contract terms and to insure that the products conform to professional historical standards. The regional historians will coordinate the review of contractor products with the appropriate historical program managers and historical committees and insure that contractors incorporate the review comments. The regional historians will also manage the publication of the historical updates.

Regional historians will work closely with commanders and historical committees to draw up and execute multiyear funding plans for fulfilling the requirements of the new field historical program. Field organizations will provide funding for the contracts to fulfill the new program requirements. MSCs and their districts will share the costs of the updates and annual historical reports, and each organization will fund its own oral history program. The regional historian will work with the MSC commander to develop a multiyear budget for producing the updates. After that budget is approved by the MSC commander, the districts will review it. Similar long-term plans will be developed with laboratories and FOAs. These approved multiyear plans will determine the activities of the regional historians who will be responsible for executing them.

The regional historians will also provide valuable support to the USACE museum program and to Corps visitors centers. The regional historians and the USACE museum curator will work with Corps organizations to develop comprehensive inventories of historical properties and to establish proper procedures that account for and preserve historical artifacts. Preservation and protection of historical properties is an important command responsibility and would support displays and exhibitions in a USACE historical museum. The regional historians will also support Corps visitor centers by reviewing the historical components of exhibits, as is now required by ER 1130B2B550 and EP 1130B2B550, *Visitor Center Program: Planning, Development, Management and Operation*, and by promoting the inclusion of Corps historical contributions in USACE visitors centers and in appropriate non-Corps museums, exhibits, and displays. The regional historians will also assist field organizations in responding to requests for information on the history of the Corps of Engineers.

The new regions would be as follows:

Region I:	NAD, TAC, and FOAs
Region II:	SAD, MVD, and HNC
Region III:	LRD and laboratories
Region IV:	SPD, SWD, and HEC
Region V:	NWD and POD

Although the five regions do not have exactly the same number of organizations, they are reasonably equivalent.

## ***2. New Historical Program Requirements.***

The new requirements are summarized in the following table:

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Old Program</b>	<b>New Program</b>			
		<b>MSCs</b>	<b>Districts</b>	<b>Labs</b>	<b>FOAs</b>
Manager and committee	X	X	X	X	X
Installation historical file	X	X	X	X	X
Annual historical report	X	X			
Histories and updates	X	X		X	X
Oral history program	X	X	X	X	X
Historical artifacts list	X	X	X	X	X

Each MSC, district, laboratory, and FOA will have a historical program manager and a historical committee. The program manager will support the regional historian in implementing the new historical program requirements, serve as the historian's point of contact in the organization, and maintain the installation historical file. The historical committees will review the decennial (ten-year) update and the annual historical reports (if required), recommend potential oral history interviewees, and assist in identifying and preserving historical artifacts.

Historical program managers with the assistance of the history committee will have primary responsibility for maintaining the installation historical file. The regional historians will advise them on proper maintenance of the file.

AR 870B5 requires annual historical reports from MACOMs and MSCs. Districts, laboratories, and FOAs will no longer prepare annual reports. Historical contractors will prepare the MSC-wide annual historical reports funded by the MSCs. The regional historians will serve as CORs for these annual reports. Oral history interview transcripts and material in the installation historical files will be important sources for the preparation of these reports.

Under the new program, MSCs, laboratories, and FOAs will publish historical updates every ten years, instead of every five years. These decennial updates will cover the activities of all the districts within the MSC as well as the activities of the MSC headquarters. Districts will no longer publish updates to their basic histories after they

make the transition to the new program, but their projects and programs will be thoroughly documented in the MSC-wide update. District and MSC historical program managers and historical committees will review the updates and provide comments to the regional historians. The MSCs and districts will provide funding for researching, writing, and publishing the decennial updates. The regional historians will manage the production and publication of these updates.

The regional historian will be responsible for establishing an oral history program, which encompasses all the organizations in the region. Historical committees will recommend interviewees, including departing commanders, to the regional historian who will conduct the interviews under contract with funds provided by the organizations. It is expected that most of the interviewees will be district personnel. Interviews will be transcribed and copies placed in the installation historical file and in the files of the regional historian.

### ***Changes from the Existing Program***

The most substantial changes under the new program are at the district level. While district historical committees will continue to play a vital role in the USACE historical program, the specific requirements at the district level are substantially reduced. Districts will be encouraged to produce historical activities and publications in support of anniversaries and other important district concerns. Districts may also want to produce histories of important projects or programs and fund those histories from project funds or other sources. The regional historians could support the districts in producing these special historical activities.

Laboratories and FOAs will continue to have the same requirements as in the existing program, except that they will not produce an annual historical report.

### ***Costs of the New Program.***

Funding for the positions of five regional historians and their support costs will be provided by HQUSACE. Support costs include travel and training plus other expenses such as office space, office furniture, computers, video-teleconferencing, ADP support, telephones, and access to copy machines and faxes.

The yearly costs of five GSB0170B13, step 1, historians with support costs would be \$390,815 (see Appendix A for details of these costs).

The yearly costs of the new historical program, which will be funded by field organizations, would be \$308,000. (see Appendix B for details of these costs).



In summary the new program would cost annually:

Regional historians	\$390,815
Proposed historical program	<u>308,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$698,815</b>

***Transition to the New Historical Program.***

The transition to the proposed program will require careful planning and coordination among the regional historians and the field historical program managers and committees. Field organizations will be expected to bring their historical programs up-to-date, so that the programs can make the transition to the new requirements. In some MSCs this transition will be relatively simple, but in others it will be more complex. The most complicated issues will involve the requirements for published histories and historical updates.

The regional historians will work with the field organizations to develop plans for the transition to the new program. The transitionary period may last for several years. During that time field organizations will complete at their own expense their histories and updates to a specified date or period. After that date or period the requirement for a decennial update will take effect. The plans should also address how to produce histories or updates of former divisions. These plans must be approved by the Office of History.

**Appendix A**  
**Costs of the Regional Historians**

Historians salaries (GSB0170B13, step 1)	
and 20 percent overhead	\$335,815
Travel and training	25,000
Office space, equipment, and support	<u>30,000</u>
<b>Total Annual Costs:</b>	<b>\$390,815</b>

**Appendix B**  
**Costs of the New Field Historical Program**

***Field Historical Program Requirements:***

1. Annual historical report from MSCs.
2. MSC-wide, lab, and FOA historical decennial updates.
3. One oral history interview per organization per year.

***Costs for Contracting Historical Program Requirements:***

<i>1. Annual Historical Report.</i>		
Researching and writing yearly report		\$5,000
<i>2. Decennial Update.</i>		
Research and writing		\$100,000
Publication		<u>20,000</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$120,000</b>
<i>3. Oral History Interview.</i>		
Preparing for, conducting, and transcribing one interview		\$2,000

### Example of a Hypothetical Historical Program

A hypothetical historical program of one MSC with four districts illustrates how the costs could be distributed over ten years.

- Every year the program costs the MSC \$15,000
  - \$1,000 per organization (MSC HQ and four districts) for the annual historical report
  - \$2,000 per organization for one oral history interview
- In the 7th year the program costs the MSC an additional \$100,000. After consulting with the regional historian, the MSC lets a contract for \$100,000 to research and write the decennial update.
  - \$20,000 per organization to research and write the update
- In the 9th year the program costs the MSC an additional \$20,000 to publish the update.
  - \$4,000 per organization to publish the update
- Over 10 years the total historical program costs \$270,000 (average annual budget of \$27,000).

### Example of a Hypothetical MSC Costs of the New Field Historical Program \$000

Hypothetical MSC	Ten years										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
MSC HQ	3	3	3	3	3	3	23	3	7	3	<b>54</b>
District 1	3	3	3	3	3	3	23	3	7	3	<b>54</b>
District 2	3	3	3	3	3	3	23	3	7	3	<b>54</b>
District 3	3	3	3	3	3	3	23	3	7	3	<b>54</b>
District 4	3	3	3	3	3	3	23	3	7	3	<b>54</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>270</b>

### Average Annual Budget

Estimates of the average annual budget for the MSCs, laboratories, and FOAs are included in the following tables. The actual annual costs of the program would be determined by the process illustrated by the preceding example of a hypothetical MSC.

#### Average Annual Budget for the New Historical Program Requirements \$000

##### MSCs

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>NAD</b>	<b>SAD</b>	<b>LRD</b>	<b>MVD</b>	<b>SWD</b>	<b>POD</b>	<b>SPD</b>	<b>NWD</b>	<b>TAC</b>	<b>HNC</b>	<b>Total</b>
Annual Report	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	<b>50</b>
Update	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	5	3	<b>104</b>
Oral History	12	12	18	14	10	10	10	14	4	2	<b>106</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>260</b>

##### Labs and FOAs

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>LABS</b>	<b>FOAs</b>	<b>Total</b>
Annual Report	0	0	<b>0</b>
Update	15	15	<b>30</b>
Oral History	8	10	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>48</b>

**Average Annual Costs for USACE Field Historical Program: \$308,000**